

Negotiating ideologies about teaching writing in a high school English classroom

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Abstract:

More research needs to examine how novice teachers successfully negotiate multiple ideologies with others in ways that allow them to construct preferred teaching identities. This qualitative study addressed that need by investigating how one high school English teacher negotiated contradictory ideologies related to writing instruction at her school. In particular, the study examined how the teacher negotiated ideologies with allies, students, and practitioner researchers. Implications suggested that practitioner research groups could provide support for ideological negotiations and teacher identity construction. Educators would benefit from teacher education that explicitly discusses and supports methods of negotiation through case study and video analysis.

Keywords: identity | teachers | instructional analysis | practitioner research | English education

Article:

Introduction

As an English Methods instructor, Amy received the following e-mail from a past student (Madison) who, during her second year of teaching high school English, was struggling to put into practice some of the methods she learned in class.

This year is not going so well for me.... I'm actually in a horrible mental state and am having a hard time justifying why I am here and what I am doing (for a multitude of reasons). I think that multiple people are feeling this way, and we have hit a little resistance about Writing Workshop this year. Parents are concerned that their children are doing too much writing and that the writing is "pointless." Teachers here have to be on the same page as far as curriculum and planning, and I am worried that I'm about to get "voted off the island" as far as Writing Workshop goes. I feel like I am fighting an uphill battle on my own, and I just can't give up on this when I have seen the benefits firsthand.

In response to Madison, Amy suggested that she join our monthly practitioner researcher group meetings to discuss constructive ways to deal with this dilemma. It was evident that Madison sought support for ways to negotiate her professional ideologies (i.e., Writing Workshop, a student-centered approach to writing instruction) with the ideologies of her institution (i.e., The Writing Blitz, a skill and drill practice for standardized assessment in composition). Negotiating conflicting ideologies with colleagues, parents, and students is a common predicament that teachers face when attempting to balance the demands of standardized exams with the needs of students (Dooley & Assaf, 2009; Handsfield, Crumpler & Dean, 2010). To deal with these dilemmas, experienced teachers have been found to negotiate high-stakes tests in their instruction through professional accommodation, personal integration, and delegation of testing to a secondary status (Handsfield et al., 2010; Rex & Nelson, 2004). Many novice teachers, however, have difficulty maintaining a balance, and as a result they either conform to institutionalized curriculum or they leave the teaching profession (Alsup, 2005). In fact, the average turnover for U.S. teachers is 17%, with 46% leaving within the first 5 years (Kopkowski, 2008).

With these concerns in mind, we (one teacher educator and two practitioner researchers) asked: *How can practitioner research help novice teachers learn how to negotiate contradictory ideologies with others in ways that allow them to construct their preferred teacher identities?* To answer that question, we needed to know more about teachers' approaches to ideological negotiations with others and how those negotiations impacted teacher identity construction. Thus, this article draws from a longitudinal qualitative research study that examined how six practitioners constructed their teacher identities in a practitioner researcher group. One finding from this study that interested us was that all six practitioners (three novice and three experienced) in the group successfully navigated contradictory ideologies with others in various ways. Specifically, we were interested in learning more from these teachers who had been making compromises to their pedagogical ideologies for the sake of standardized curriculum, (e.g., skill-and-drill instruction or test practice), and who recently attempted to negotiate with others in order to make changes in curriculum that allowed them to engage in a wider range of instructional practices (e.g., Writing Workshop) that aligned with their ideologies. To do this, teachers held fast to their ideological beliefs and refined negotiation skills to reshape the valued ideologies of colleagues, parents, and students to reach a collective advantage (i.e., teach students how to write and pass the writing test). For this study, we wondered if and how the inquiry group contributed to those successful navigations, an area in need of more research. Thus, we focus on one case study to answer the following questions: In what ways did Madison negotiate conflicting ideologies with others in her school? How did those negotiations shape Madison's teacher identity? What role did practitioner research play in those negotiations? Findings from this study contribute to scholarship about the impact of practitioner research on ideological negotiations with others and teacher identity construction.

Theoretical Framework: Ideology and Identity

Understanding how different educational ideologies are negotiated with others is important because of the multiple, and often conflicting, expectations teachers face at work. In particular, negotiations between personal and institutional ideologies greatly impact teacher development,

including the construction of practitioner identities (defined later in this section). By ideologies, we mean a system of principles that form the basis of social, political, and economic worlds. Ideologies can be thought of as a comprehensive vision that is revealed through discourse. These networks of belief are “usually seen as ‘the way things really are’ by the groups holding them, and they become the taken-for-granted ways of making sense of the world” (Meighan & Harber, 2007, p. 212). To refer to how people develop these systems of beliefs, Bakhtin (1981) used the phrase *ideological becoming*. He stated that at some point people are shaped by an *authoritative discourse* that is socially accepted, rarely challenged, and infused with authority acknowledged in the past. At other times, people are influenced by an *internally persuasive discourse* in which a person makes sense of something on their own in a flexible and responsive way. Discourses, then, refer to the language used that represents and fosters a particular ideology within a community of practice (Gee, 2010).

Novice teachers often struggle between these two forms of discourses as they explore the ideologies of their school (Freedman & Ball, 2004). Struggles occur when ideologies clash within the same context, and people are forced to reconfigure those worldviews (Bakhtin, 1981). Gee (2010) states that power plays a role in negotiating ideologies, specifically as it pertains to the meaning of value (e.g., teaching writing). For example, administration and/or the value of high-stakes exams have power over the instructional preferences of teachers and students. If closed, meaning is established. When reopened, a new element is introduced and members must negotiate again. For example, Madison's research project reopened a new element of what it meant to teach writing at her school.

Part of a teacher's job, then, is to become a sophisticated negotiator of multiple ideologies with colleagues, parents, and students. By negotiation, we mean a dialogue between people intended to resolve a point of difference or reach an individual/collective advantage. Although rarely discussed in teacher education programs, these negotiations are important because they impact how teachers enact their professional identities. For example, when an individual embraces an ideology (e.g., student-centered instruction), they construct their identities (e.g., take on behaviors and discourses of a student-centered teacher) according to the principles of that ideology. Identities, then, are self-understandings and are recognized “ways of being” at a given time and place (Gee, 2000; Holland, Skinner, Lachicotte & Cain, 1998). Thus, learning to teach is not merely a collection of content and strategies, but also a “process of becoming” (Wenger, 1998, p. 215) that involves taking on behaviors, discourses, ideologies, gestures, and dress (Gee, 2000) that are associated with teachers within a school. Furthermore, identity work is a process of becoming a member of a school whose ideologies might differ from the newcomer's; thus, the newcomer must negotiate her/his own ideologies to become a legitimate member of this community without letting go of the ideologies he/she prefers. Novice teachers often encounter a struggle when joining a school whose authoritative discourse conflicts with the personally persuasive discourse (and, thus, identities) of the novice teacher. To deal with those conflicts, they must negotiate ideologies with themselves, but also with colleagues, parents and students in order to reshape the world around them so that they can construct and enact their preferred teacher identities within that school.

As illustrated, ideologies, identities, and discourses are interrelated. Thus, when teachers negotiate ideologies, they also negotiate teacher identities and discourses. In addition, several

factors other than ideologies (e.g., race, gender, religion) impact teacher identity construction. For this article, however, we focus on how Madison negotiated ideologies with others to highlight the complex ways in which teachers must shape principles that form the basis of the social and political world of the school. It is those ideological negotiations that impact teacher identities and discourses and ultimately how teachers “fit in” within a school community.

Review of Literature

Negotiating Ideologies

Preservice and novice teachers often struggle to negotiate multiple ideologies with others in their institution (Alsup, 2005; Smagorinsky, Gibson, Bickmore, Moore & Cook, 2004). For example, in a study about how standardized, high-stakes curriculum shaped an African-American preservice teacher's identities, Agee (2004) found that several ideological contradictions existed. Although Tina, a teacher in the study, went into her preservice teaching wanting to teach multicultural literature and to enact more student-centered strategies, she encountered racial bias and conflicts within herself about what she wanted to do as a teacher and what was possible within the institution. In spite of attention to controversial issues in her education courses, Tina was ill-prepared to navigate these dilemmas. Other research indicates that school context greatly impacts teacher negotiations. For example, Smagorinsky et al. (2004) found that Nicole, a preservice teacher who graduated from a student-centered teacher education program, had difficulty implementing her desired practices in schools with a “corporate climate.” In a different environment, Nicole was able to flourish.

To better prepare future teachers, teacher educators suggest opportunities for them to unpack these dilemmas in courses and professional development contexts (Smagorinsky, Cook, Moore, Jackson, & Fry, 2004). For example, Assaf and Dooley (2010) investigated how eight beginning teachers' ideologies were constructed and reconstructed by examining the struggles and tensions teachers expressed in a multicultural literacy course. They found that revealing dialogic tensions through social interaction was critical to helping preservice teachers develop ideological clarity, especially related to multicultural education. One way to do this is by asking teachers to write narratives that uncover, over time, how they negotiate authoritative and internally persuasive discourses. The use of such dialogic narratives can reveal the dynamics of preparing teachers to become flexible cultural practitioners in diverse settings (Rogers, Marshall, & Tyson, 2006).

Ideological negotiations are not static. Handsfield et al. (2010) pointed out that a fourth-grade teacher negotiated competing ideologies through co-constructions of knowledge with peers during everyday practices. In other words, negotiations are always in process, and they occur during moment-to-moment interactions with students, colleagues, and parents. Although much research has focused on how teachers negotiate ideologies within themselves, less research focuses on how teachers negotiate ideologies with others in order to reach a collective advantage. To contribute to that line of research, this study illustrates how one teacher successfully managed negotiations with others in ways that enabled her to enact and construct her preferred teacher identities. Specifically, we highlight how Madison used dialogue with others to reshape their valued ideologies about writing instruction in order to reach a collective agreement about

teaching students to be successful writers. Madison was successful in those negotiations because of the support of a practitioner researcher group.

Practitioner Research

Many terms are associated with practitioner research, such as teacher research, action research, reflective practitioner, and practitioner inquiry (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). For this article, we use Nolen and Putten's (2007, p. 401) definition of practitioner research as "a practical yet systematic research method that enables teachers to investigate their own teaching and their students' learning." To conduct research, teachers typically begin with a burning question about instruction and they systematically collect and analyze data over time to answer the question (Hubbard & Power, 1997). The most successful practitioner research occurs in groups with invested participants who support and challenge members to critically examine their data and educational ideologies (Abbate-Vaughn, 2004), and encourage them to share findings through presentations and publications (Labaree, 2003; Merritt, 2004). As a result, this kind of professional development can impact the construction of teacher identities (Vetter, 2012).

Method

Context and Participants

This qualitative study used the grounded theory method (Corbin & Strauss, 2007) and discourse analysis (Gee, 2010) to examine data collected over a 2-year period during monthly practitioner researcher group meetings. Our intentional focus on Madison emerged from ongoing analysis of a larger data set that suggested the importance of practitioner research as support for negotiating ideologies with others in ways that enabled them to enact their teacher identities (Vetter, 2012). One professor and three graduate students created the group (Triad Teacher Researchers, TTR) after a year-long teacher researcher course at a university in the Southeast. The group hopes to create a community of supportive, passionate teachers, and to contribute to the professional body of knowledge about teaching and learning.

Participants during the 2-year study included six White, middle-class female teachers from different schools and grade levels: Amy, Joy, Madison, Melody, Audrey, and Hailey. Amy, the original instructor in the practitioner research class, led the monthly meetings. The group met at her house and all participants brought food, which contributed to the social aspect of the gatherings. Joy and Hailey were elementary school teachers with 6 and 10 years teaching experience, who shared their individual classroom research (i.e., math literacy and teacher journals) with the group each month. Melody, a doctoral student teaching at the university, used the meetings to share her dissertation data related to higher education. Audrey, a Boys and Girls Club instructor, completed a research project involving parent/teacher relationships.

Madison

Madison, in her twenties, teaches at a high school in the Southeast United States. Seventy percent of students in the school are White, 24% African American, and 4% Latino. Seventeen percent of students are eligible for free and reduced lunch. The school was above average in

scores on the End Of Course Exams, with an average of 96% in 2011. During her third year, Madison attended a graduate program in English Education at another local university that required her to complete a practitioner research project. She attended our group meetings for extra support. This study focuses on Madison because of her consistent participation in the group and dedication to her inquiry project over two years.

The Researchers

Amy taught Madison as an undergraduate in English Education in the last two courses of her program (English Methods and Student Teaching Seminar). Before becoming an assistant professor in English Education, Amy taught high school English for five years. Joy taught elementary and middle school and is a current doctoral student who focuses on literacy and teacher research. She co-founded TTR and participated in the monthly group meetings. We recognize that the power structures embedded in a teacher/student relationship certainly shaped Madison's responses to Amy. For example, Madison most likely did not share everything with Amy since she was her past professor. In particular, she might have felt like she needed to situate herself in particular ways to illustrate her success as a teacher. We believe, however, that the sustained and consistent reflective conversations and responses, the multiple forms of data, and personal observations of Madison over several years provided us with a rich corpus of data to confirm patterns. In addition, at the time of the study, Madison was no longer her student and the collaborative nature of the group meetings promoted honest conversation about the obstacles and celebrations of teacher research.

To broaden interpretations and challenge our assumptions we peer debriefed with colleagues who were experts in teacher education and/or practitioner research. Two colleagues in particular read this study and offered critical feedback related to our initial coding of the data. As a result, we refined our codes to focus on the explicit details about how she negotiated ideologies with various members (colleagues, students, and teacher researchers). We also member checked with Madison through informal conversations and by including her as an author of this article. We incorporated as much of her voice as possible in this article to illustrate her words through multiple forms of data (transcribed group meetings, paper, conference presentations, and informal interviews).

Data Collection and Analysis

Across two years of data collection, we observed (as observer/participants) and recorded 20 practitioner researcher group discussions that lasted approximately 2 hours and engaged a maximum of six people in dialogue about recent projects. Data collection also included three informal interviews with Madison about interpretations of the data and artifacts. These artifacts included Madison's PowerPoint presentations from professional conferences and a final paper for her research project. The data analyzed for this article totals over 40 hours of audio documentation of practitioner research discussions, observational field notes (from 20 observations), artifacts, and informal interviews.

Data analysis was inductive and occurred in three phases. In phase one, we read and open-coded the field notes (Corbin & Strauss, 2007) with a broad focus on how Madison constructed her

teacher identities within TTR. This analysis generated several themes, including how Madison negotiated multiple ideologies with others to enact a writing workshop identity within her school. Phase two involved systematic analysis of Madison's ideological negotiations with others. In this phase, we went back through all of the data that involved moments when Madison attempted to negotiate conflicting ideologies with others. To develop categories, we moved back and forth between the field notes, transcriptions, and artifacts. We modified, merged, and detailed themes as necessary to fit the data. From this analysis, the following three themes emerged: (a) Negotiating Ideologies with Allies; (b) Negotiating Ideologies with Students; and (c) Negotiating Ideologies with Practitioner Researchers.

To better understand the depth of these negotiations (phase three), we chose one representative example from the three categories and engaged in discourse analysis using Gee's (2010) tools for analysis. For example, Gee recommends examining the situated meanings, or the meaning of a word in a particular time or place (see Table 1). Using the e-mail at the beginning of the article, we identified some key phrases ("horrible," "mental state," "resistance," and "uphill battle") that described what it was like for Madison to attempt a writing workshop in a school focused on standardized assessments with parents worried that students are "doing too much writing" that is "pointless."

TABLE 1. Gee's Tools for Discourse Analysis

Situated meanings	Social languages	Cultural models	Situated identities
What are the key words or phrases in this text?	What is the grammar and function of this language?	What are the speaker's underlying assumptions and beliefs?	What Discourses are produced here?
What do particular words mean in this context?	What type of person speaks like this?	What are the simplified storylines that one must assume for this to make sense?	Who is the speaker trying to be and what is he or she trying to do?
What do these words mean in this time or place?	Is this grammar appropriate for the setting?	What cultural models does the speaker believe?	What institutions maintain this type of Discourse? How does one think, act like, dress like?

We also used Gee's social languages tool to identify the kind of grammar used for the function of the language. For example, we recognized that Madison used the pronoun "I" several times throughout the e-mail to express her concern. In a sense, she personalizes the e-mail to ask us how to negotiate between what she learned at the university and the realities of public schools (see Table 2). We also examined what Gee (2010) terms "Discourse models" by asking: What are the speaker's underlying assumptions and beliefs? It is clear that Madison believes that writing workshop will provide students the opportunity to situate themselves as authors and succeed on the high-stakes exam. Colleagues and parents believe otherwise. Thus, the ideological contradictions between the two are clear. Finally, we investigated the situated identities of Madison by asking whom the speaker is trying to be and what is she trying to do? From the e-mail, we determined that she desired to negotiate ideologies with others about writing in order to situate herself as a writing workshop teacher. Although a micro analytic approach provides significant insights to teacher interactions, limitations to this kind of analysis exist, including possible oversights and misrepresentations based on the assumptions we bring to the analysis.

Findings

Madison's Teacher Research Project

To develop context, we begin this section with a description of Madison's teaching practices. Madison used Writing Workshop in her classroom as opposed to The Writing Blitz, a standardized program for preparing students to succeed on high-stakes writing exams. Specifically, Writing Blitz is a teacher-centered program that helps the teacher with instruction in teaching the writing of definition and cause-effect essays while addressing all elements of the content and convention rubrics used for the state writing assessment at Grade 10. Each 90-minute lesson had standard course of study objectives, an essential question, materials, a spelling mini-lesson, a conventions mini-lesson, and writing activities designed to deal with one or more content issues.

TABLE 2. Teacher Researcher Identity Constructions

Transcript	Situated meanings	Social languages	Cultural models	Situated identities
This year is not going so well for me.... I'm actually in a horrible mental state and am having a hard time justifying why I am here and what I am doing (for a multitude of reasons). I think that multiple people are feeling this way, and we have hit a little resistance about writing workshop this year. Parents are concerned that their students are doing too much writing and that the writing is "pointless." As you know, teachers here have to be on the same page as far as curriculum and planning, and I am so worried that I'm about to get "voted off the island" as far as writing workshop goes. I feel like I am fighting an uphill battle on my own, and I just can't give up on this when I have seen the benefits firsthand.	Some key phrases in her email are "horrible," "mental state," "resistance," and "uphill battle" to describe what it was like for her to attempt writing workshop in a school highly focused on curriculum that practiced for the standardized test at the end of the year with parents worried that students are "doing too much writing" that is "pointless." She believes that writing workshop is beneficial, but is worried that she might be "voted off the island" or in other words fired or forced to switch curriculum if she did not equip herself with research and facts about the method.	The entire form of Madison's language is in an e-mail, pleading for advice from her professors who taught her this method. In a sense, she is asking us how to negotiate between what she learned at the university and the realities of public schools. At the end of her e-mail, she stated "I know you both are active supporters of the workshop model, so any advice you can offer would be so appreciated!!" At this point, she situates herself as a student again who is using the university as a resource.	It is clear that Madison believes that writing workshop will provide students the opportunity to situate themselves as authors and succeed on the high-stakes exam. Colleagues and parents believe otherwise.	At this point, Madison is situating herself as a teacher who does not buy into the nationwide approach of standardized assessment and believes that students need opportunities to write in various formats and be authors.

In contrast, Madison believed that Writing Workshop would not only prepare her students to succeed on the writing exam, but also situate them as writers/authors with skills they could transfer in other subject areas. Amy introduced this approach to Madison in her undergraduate program. Her work with Writing Workshop continued when she agreed to host students in a Teaching of Writing course led by a former professor at the university. The goal of the course was to engage preservice teachers in the Writing Workshop experience by conferencing with individual high school students as they worked through the writing process. After doing this for two years, Madison developed an interest in and passion for the Writing Workshop approach.

Madison defined Writing Workshop as a student-centered learning approach that differentiates based on student needs, opens opportunities for creative expression, and individual conferencing. She used Calkin's (1994) approach to teaching writing by developing a structured writing schedule that included uninterrupted writing time based on student topics, mini-lessons based on the writing process, learning about mechanics through context, and inviting authors to speak and share their work with students.

As stated at the beginning of the article, Madison worried that she would not be able to negotiate her professional ideologies (Writing Workshop) with the institutional ideologies of her school (Writing Blitz). She used key phrases such as, "horrible," "mental state," "resistance," and "uphill battle" to describe what it was like to attempt Writing Workshop in a school focused on test scores. In particular, she worried that she would be "voted off the island" (i.e., fired or forced to change curriculum) if she did not equip herself with data about the method. Up to this point, Madison had been sacrificing her professional ideologies for ideologies of the school by practicing the mandated Writing Blitz curriculum rather than fully implementing a Writing Workshop approach. Because of her discomfort with the compromises she had been making, she attempted to negotiate with others about broadening accepted notions of writing instruction at the school.

As a result, Madison developed a research study with another colleague (Caryn) at her school that compared and contrasted writing instruction in two grade 10 honors classes using the two described methods. Caryn, who practiced The Writing Blitz approach, agreed to collect data in her classroom and compare it with Madison's use of Writing Workshop out of curiosity about the best method to teach writing. The chosen classes were at similar achievement levels according to previous state testing and both classes were required to take the same county benchmark and the state writing assessment at the end of the year. Both collected data from work samples, student surveys, portfolios, and test scores (both county and state required) that were compared to determine the success of the methods. Together, they presented this comparative study at a local teacher research conference in the area.

Negotiate Ideologies With Allies

Madison realized that in order to negotiate contrasting ideologies with others about how to teach writing at her school, she needed to develop allies with parents and colleagues. At the beginning of the year, Madison encountered resistance from parents. In a group meeting, she echoed initial concerns by stating, "Parents are concerned that their children are doing too much writing and that the writing is 'pointless.' I am having no problems justifying the workshop to parents. I knew there would be resistance and I was prepared to handle that." Madison used the words and phrases "concerned," "too much," and "pointless" to describe how parents view Writing Workshop. She even put "pointless" in quotations to express her disagreement. In this situation, we see two ideologies colliding: Parents' belief in prep for the test versus a Writing Workshop approach. At the same time, she used words like "justify" and "resistance" to indicate that she was aware that parents would disagree and push back. Perhaps she recognized that Writing Workshop was not a traditional approach and after some education about its benefits, parents would be convinced that it is a legitimate practice. By saying "prepared to handle that ...," she situated herself as a confident teacher who was able to communicate with parents in a way that

helped them understand how her approach related to learning how to write, their common goal. In other words, Madison recognized that gaining parents as allies was important, and she was prepared to do what it took to gain support.

She was not prepared, however, to deal with resistance from colleagues, especially her former classmate, Carmen, who agreed to try out Writing Workshop in her classroom that same year. In an e-mail to me, Madison stated:

However, [Carmen] just came to me concerned. I think that she is starting to let the concerns of parents talk her out of the idea all together. Her exact words were "I don't see how having them write fiction is teaching them anything about writing. They are never going to do anything like that in college." I countered with an explanation about using imagery and figurative language to improve writing, and showed her writing tests that scored high because of their creativity and imagery. I also assured her that she couldn't expect masterful pieces of writing the first quarter of school (when students have barely been taught writing). She seemed hesitant to believe me. As you know, teachers here at [Nathan High School] have to be on the same page as far as curriculum and planning, and I am worried that I'm about to get "voted off the island" as far as writing workshop goes.

Her use of the transition "however" indicates that resistance from her colleagues, especially Carmen, was unexpected. In her re-voicing of Carmen, the phrase "I don't see how" indicates that Carmen was not convinced that Writing Workshop would work. Madison attempted to negotiate with Carmen's ideologies by stating a counter argument that provided insight about how it could improve writing. She used academic languages, such as "figurative language" and "test scores" to prove her point and perhaps cater to Carmen's concerns. Despite this attempt, Madison used the word "hesitant" to describe her colleague. At this point, it is clear that Madison believed that she needed Carmen's support in order to incorporate Writing Workshop in her classroom because her school wants grade levels to be on the same page. If Madison did not create allies in her department, then she would not be able to implement her approach. Thus, she realized that the construction of her Writing Workshop teacher identity was dependent on the negotiation of ideologies with her colleagues. Sometimes this meant persuading them to negotiate their own ideologies about writing to broaden accepted notions of writing instruction.

After several weeks of coaxing from Madison, Carmen agreed to continue using Writing Workshop in her classroom and present with her at the practitioner researcher conference as an advocate for the approach. According to Madison, her method, however, was different:

Carmen is presenting with me in November, so I really asked her to focus on Writing Workshop as far as CP [College Preparation] goes and how we can adapt it for a lower-level student. I think she and I differ a lot on our views about what a Writing Workshop is and how it should be implemented. I think she's still having trouble letting go of the control, whereas I may be sometimes too lax, according to my administrator.

At this point, we see Madison's persistent efforts have convinced Carmen to at least try out Writing Workshop in her College Preparation (CP) classes (i.e., on-level, non-honors class). However, as she described, Carmen modified the workshop to fit her style. Madison described

Carmen's approach as “having trouble letting go of control,” which indicates her assumption that Carmen was not facilitating a student-led approach, one value of Writing Workshop. Madison mentioned that administration views student-centered instruction as lax, thus illustrating an ideological conflict for both her and Carmen. As Madison attempted to develop an ally, she created more ideological clashes about what it meant to be a Writing Workshop teacher. For example, in an attempt to make sense out of the new approach and perhaps please administration, Carmen struggled to negotiate her ideologies about writing in ways that made sense for her. In addition, Madison struggled to negotiate with her allies' interpretations of this practice.

As time progressed, however, Madison was not as desperate to have everyone's approval. She realized that her Writing Workshop identity was not as dependent on the ideologies of parents or colleagues anymore because she was able to pull from other resources for support (e.g., practitioner research and student outcomes). At the same time, it was important for her to persuade others to negotiate their ideologies in order to open new possibilities for teaching writing at her school.

Negotiate Ideologies With Students

To construct a Writing Workshop identity, Madison also negotiated ideologies with students about what it meant to be a writer in her classroom. Oftentimes this was complicated because the best writing instruction was not always based on students' preference in the experience, but on the writing they produced. Students came from classrooms that practiced a Writing Blitz approach, so they were not accustomed to writing in various genres and developing their own writing schedule. Thus, she was asking *them* to negotiate their ideologies about learning to write. As a result, students voiced their discomfort. During the beginning weeks of Writing Workshop in her classroom, Madison noticed that although students vocalized complaints about the amount of writing, they turned in their work on time. She said, “I'm pleasantly surprised at how many students did not wait until the last week to write their essays or papers or stories ... with the type of pieces that they're choosing. A lot of them are choosing more creative pieces, which is nice.” In this conversation, she used words like “pleasantly surprised” and “nice” to describe the timely fashion and genre of writing that students completed. She inferred that students did not typically turn in work on time in a Writing Blitz approach, which was later confirmed in a final presentation she completed for a national conference. She also illustrated her assumption that creative writing is a “nice” addition to the classroom as opposed to a pointless practice. At this point, Madison was able to situate her students as authors and they appeared to be taking up these positions through the work they produced, a sign of a successful negotiation.

As the semester progressed, Madison recognized that students' initial resistance might be an indicator of their writing ability. During our third meeting, Madison stated:

So, I'm meeting a lot of resistance [from students] but I like that ... it's giving me a very accurate view of where they are when they come to me. I've seen the difference that it makes so I know where they're headed, which is nice too. I have a student already, first quarter, write me a twenty-six-page story. Insane!

Madison used key phrases, such as “accurate view” and “know where they're headed” to illustrate how writing workshop helped her understand her students' growth as writers. As a result, rather than viewing resistance as an indicator that she should stop writing workshop, she interpreted it as students' discomfort with writing in a new way. With time and practice, she discovered that students became more comfortable and prolific writers (e.g., “twenty-six-page story”). Thus, to negotiate writing instruction ideologies with students, Madison relied on student outcomes rather than initial verbal feedback.

As the semester progressed, Madison continued to develop Writing Workshop instruction, which in turn prompted more resistance from students because the approach continued to redefine what it meant to be a writer in her classroom. She stated:

I started them journaling and the journaling that I'm doing now is from a book that's called *Unjournaling* and it's all creative prompts. So like today they had to write a story about a girl named Dot, without using any letters that have dots in 'em (no I's or J's). So I'm having them write more creatively in class. There are prompts in that book that have things like: Use imagery to describe the disgusting stuff in the bottom of the sink. But don't use these words. So, I'm pushing them more in class that way by just starting with a bell ringer, which they think is pointless but I know it's not.

Madison used the pronoun “I” several times to describe how she used Writing Workshop to promote writing. She also used a mix of informal (“like”) with formal English teacher language (“imagery,” “journaling”) to describe the methods she used to promote various kinds of writing in her classroom. In her final statement, she inferred that students still resisted and used the word “pointless” again to illustrate their beliefs about doing bell ringers (warm-ups). In an attempt to negotiate her instructional ideologies with their ideologies, she resisted their complaints by saying, “I know it's not” pointless. At first glance, this phrase could be interpreted as Madison disregarding the needs of students to implement her preferred practices. We know, however, that Madison collected evidence over the past 2 months to illustrate how these practices have benefitted her students. She also pulled from resources about her methods (e.g., *Unjournaling*, Thurston & DiPrince, 2006) to validate her choices. At this point, Madison situated herself as a confident Writing Workshop teacher who refined her practice to produce positive outcomes for students, despite their verbal complaints. Although Madison was confident that most students would persist and succeed, students might have felt uncomfortable and overwhelmed with these new practices. As a negotiation tool, Madison assuaged their fears about succeeding as a writer in her classroom by providing mentor texts, individual conferences, and consistent feedback for final drafts.

Negotiating Ideologies With Practitioner Researchers

The practitioner inquiry group helped Madison negotiate contrasting ideologies with others in her school by validating and expanding her research about Writing Workshop. In an e-mail from Madison to Amy during her second year of teacher research, she wrote:

I do not receive much support within my school community. Many people feel that because I am so new to the profession that I should not attempt to conduct action research

in my classroom; many were afraid that this would “mess with” state testing procedures and scores and bring down the reputation of the school. One thing that I have really benefited from is meeting face-to-face with other teacher researchers. In this group I am not viewed as a “baby teacher,” but am treated like an equal, even though I do not have as much experience as other researchers. My ideas and suggestions are regarded as important, which really gives me the confidence to stand up for new ideas at my school.

In Madison's e-mail about her experience with the teacher research group, she used key words such as “do not receive much support,” “new to profession,” “should not attempt,” and “mess with state testing” to illustrate the ideologies of the institution she was working in. Such phrases indicate that her school did not provide the kind of support she needed as a teacher eager to integrate innovative practices. In contrast, she used key words such as “treated like an equal,” “ideas and suggestions are regarded as important,” and “gives me confidence” to describe how the practitioner researcher group validated and expanded her ideas as an educator. Because Madison did not find the support she needed from her school, she sought out other communities to provide that support for her. As a result, she gained more resources (i.e., evidence) to help her negotiate with others at her school. In addition, it was clear that Madison had made several compromises (e.g., practicing The Writing Blitz) for the sake of the school's ideologies and she was eager to make changes so that she could enact her preferred teacher identity. The overall support of the group also helped her to be unwavering in her belief about writing workshop and to be persistent when she negotiated with others.

Madison realized that data would be a useful negotiation tool. At the first meeting, Madison expressed the belief that evidence-based research could be used as a tool to negotiate the use of writing workshop practices with parents, students, and colleagues who supported a Writing Blitz approach. At one point during the meeting, she said, “I don't really have anything to support what's in my head ...” The key word *support* indicated that Madison believed that data could help her sell this method to her colleagues, students and parents.

During the second meeting, Madison struggled to figure out how to collect this evidence. Audrey made the following suggestion:

You could even ask at the beginning: “How would you describe yourself as a writer?” and then ask them again. Ask them the same question over and over again. Then you can collect that as data and you can see how a student progresses over time. You might find someone that says, “I don't write at all” at the very beginning and at the end say, not only do you write, but I have this eloquent description of what it means to be a writer to them. You can actually show author ... growth and authorship over time.

At this point, Audrey used key words, such as “same question over and over again,” “student progresses over time,” and “growth and authorship over time” to illustrate the systematic aspect of research. Her use of research lingo (e.g., collect that as data, student progresses) expanded Madison's ideas about how to conduct the research to help her answer her question about developing students as authors. Like Madison, Audrey assumed that systematic research would provide the evidence that Madison needed to be successful with this innovative strategy.

In the group, Madison shared her ideas, which validated the value of Writing Workshop. In the following example, she described how she used mini-lessons and student examples to help another teacher researcher (Hailey), understand how Writing Workshop worked in her classroom.

I use student examples all the time. What I'll do mostly with my mini-lessons is I'll start with very general things ... and then once they start writing and I start looking at teacher edits, I see where they struggle, so then I start creating lessons around what they need. I'll do a 10-minute mini-lesson and then ..., I'll pick someone that does that skill really well. Like imagery, for example, the other day we had a talk about what imagery was because I was writing it on everybody's paper and ... they didn't understand what I meant. We talked about imagery as a class; did a little mini-lesson on it and then I pulled students in the class that had used imagery and done a really nice job of including that imagery in their paper, and read some examples and showed it. So then they were going back to their papers and fixing it. But the beauty about Writing Workshop is you can set it up however it works best for your students. There's no right way.

Hailey followed with, "That's a good idea. See, I didn't think about using it to replace the traditional definition cause and effect essay." In this example, Hailey used key phrases like "good idea" and "I didn't think about using it ..." to validate Madison's description and express how it expanded her notion of how writing workshop might work in her own classroom. Unlike the resistance that Madison experienced at her school, Hailey listened and validated Madison's approach by stating what she learned from it. In addition, by describing how she implemented Writing Workshop, Madison situated herself more as an expert with specific examples of how it worked in her classroom. She used words like "beauty," "set it up however it works best for your students," and "there's no right way" to express her belief that teaching writing is not a one size fits all approach. Hailey's comment about not thinking about using writing workshop to replace the traditional essay (tested writing) illustrated the current ideology of the school system that successful writing means that students must be able to write a definition and/or cause and effect essay. Madison pushed back against that notion by providing opportunities for her students to write in multiple genres and she used their writing to shape mini-lessons about grammar and style. Such validation and expansion for Madison who was trying to negotiate contradictory ideologies with others was beneficial because it showed her that these methods are valued in other educational spaces.

Finally, practitioner research provided her with evidence about student learning that gave her the tools to negotiate with colleagues in the following years. As part of Madison's practitioner research project, she surveyed her students and developed a presentation about her research that she presented at a conference. In this presentation, she illustrated how students' perceptions of writing changed over time. Madison showed evidence from surveys that after writing workshop her students enjoyed writing more, assumed that most people liked writing, worried less about what their teacher thought about their writing, and enjoyed sharing their writing. From this survey, Madison concluded that Writing Workshop increased the enjoyment and act of writing within her classroom. In addition, Madison analyzed results from the benchmark exams and found them to be consistent with both the Writing Workshop and Writing Blitz groups. Although she would have preferred the scores of the Writing Workshop students to be higher, Madison

was convinced that this approach could not only help students succeed on high-stakes exams, but also help to situate students as lifelong writers. Such outcomes validated her ideology about writing instruction and enabled her to construct a Writing Workshop identity at the school. Currently (2 years later), several teachers at her school practice Writing Workshop and administrators support this pedagogical method.

Discussion and Implications

Gee (2011) wrote, “Meaning is something we negotiate and contest over socially. It is something that has its roots in ‘culture’ in the very deep and extended sense that it resides in an attempt to find common ground” (p. 13). In order to find common ground about writing instruction, Madison negotiated competing ideologies with allies, students, and practitioner researchers. What first seemed like the simple act of trying out a new teaching method, quickly turned into a complex negotiation about what it meant to teach writing in her school. In other words, she creatively negotiated multiple ideologies with others in order to form a Writing Workshop identity within a Writing Blitz world. Her approaches to negotiation included acts of agency or “new ways of being” (Holland et al., 1998, p. 5) that allowed her to modify a curriculum that at first appeared to be fixed. For novice teachers, this means recognizing that they play an active role in constructing their teacher identity and to do that, they must negotiate ideologies with colleagues, parents, and students in creative ways. For Madison, she used dialogue with the mentioned parties to convince them that her method of writing instruction would also help them reach the common goal of teaching students to write. She did not want everyone to practice Writing Workshop, but she wanted the opportunity to engage in the practices that supported her values as a teacher and allowed her to enact her preferred teaching identities. Below, we discuss Madison's approaches to negotiating with others about their ideologies, the challenges associated with those approaches, and her process of negotiation over time.

One approach that Madison used was the formation of allies, particularly with parents and colleagues. To do this, she educated both parties about the legitimacy of the writing workshop approach. As mentioned, she talked with them during formal (i.e., parent conferences) and informal conversations (i.e., hallway conversations). Because of her time, effort, and persistence, she created enough advocates to implement the approach and study it. She faced several challenges to forming allies, however. First, she needed to be confident in the Writing Workshop approach to both educate and defend it to parents and colleagues. As a novice teacher, this stance was difficult due to lack of experience. Madison used writing workshop literature, university allies, and practitioner research as resources for that confidence. Second, Madison allocated time to educate others about the approach. For many novice teachers, their time is used planning new lessons and learning the culture of the school, leaving little time to advocate for curriculum change. Because Madison was able to use her research project for graduate credit, time spent was beneficial in several of her professional worlds.

Madison's second approach included negotiating ideologies with her students by relying on student outcomes rather than informal feedback and/or reactions. In particular, she learned to view student resistance as an indicator of learning rather than a reason to doubt instruction or blame students. Thus, negotiating with students involved understanding why students did or did not resist during Writing Workshop and establishing compromise to create spaces for various

learners. Specifically, Madison used mentor texts, individual conferences, and constructive feedback to reassure students as they grappled with a new writing process. At the same time, student resistance was a constant challenge that Madison continued to problem-solve with individual students and became more comfortable with as she gained experience.

Madison's final approach to negotiation included working in a practitioner researcher group. The approach afforded her the opportunity to engage in a systematic research study that she could use to educate colleagues, parents, and students of its value. Specifically, the teacher research group helped her negotiate ideologies with others and remain confident by providing a space for social interaction, validation, and critical reflection. Challenges to this approach include the time it took for her to collect data, attend monthly meetings, and present the research. In addition, not all novice teachers will have access to this kind of inquiry group.

Madison's process of negotiation shifted over time. In the beginning phases, Madison focused on developing allies by discussing Writing Workshop literature that she learned at the university. Negotiations in the beginning were the most vulnerable for Madison because she had no data from her classroom to support this method. After she noted results from her students, Madison used student outcomes to persuade parents, colleagues and students that this method was useful. At the end of her inquiry project, Madison gained enough confidence and experience to share her results at local and national conferences. With that said, resistance still existed (e.g., students stating that warm-ups were pointless after writing prolific assignments). Thus, Madison's process of negotiation included an ebb and flow of successes and challenges that aided in her construction of a Writing Workshop identity.

For teachers to mediate negotiations integral to school curriculum, they must be able to reflect on the ideological foundations of education in relation to their personal ideologies about pedagogy. Thus, ideological reflection and self-reflection should be a major objective of teacher education and professional development. Implications from this study suggest that preservice and novice teachers would benefit from explicit description about the negotiation process of teachers who implemented innovative practices in a traditional context (Assaf & Dooley, 2010). Several ways that teacher educators could do this is through case study work (Levin, 2003), video case studies (Koc, Peker, & Osmanoglu, 2009), dialogic narratives (Rogers et al., 2006), and online and face-to-face scenarios (Mahon, Bryant, Brown, & Kim, 2010) about successful negotiation skills. Specifically, it would help preservice teachers to understand how teacher research, student outcomes, and gaining allies can be constructive negotiation skills.

Implications from the study also suggest that teachers would benefit from supported practitioner research in schools. As mentioned, the practitioner research group provided support for Madison as she negotiated ideologies with others in ways that allowed her the space to enact a writing workshop identity. Thus, we recommend practitioner research groups as a significant professional development model that should be practiced and supported more in schools. To do that, inquiry groups, either school-led or in partnership with a university faculty member, must occur in supportive contexts, include intellectually invested practitioners, promote negotiation of ideologies, and happen over sustained periods of time (Zeichner, 2002). In addition, they must be a space where teachers can question, critique, and challenge their own practices and ideologies. To create and sustain this kind of professional development, administration must support

teachers by valuing teacher-led inquiry project, providing time for substantive collaboration, and promoting the sharing of findings at conferences and in journals by providing monetary support. In addition, higher education can foster the tenets of practitioner research in undergraduate and graduate teacher education. For example, undergraduates could engage in small-scale teacher research projects during student teaching. For graduate students, we recommend a year-long required course that supports teachers through a systematic practitioner research project. Finally, universities can facilitate teacher research groups focused on a topic of study or subject area. It was this kind of group that provided Madison a space to examine conflicts and validate professional beliefs through systematic research that helped her to negotiate conflicting ideologies in ways that allowed her to persist as the teacher she wanted to be.

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